

The Counterpoint Club

A Chamber Music Podcast



Teacher Guide

Opus 1, Episodes 1-5

Teacher Guide: Opus I

This Teacher Guide is designed as a companion resource for the 5 episodes of the first Opus, (what we're calling seasons or series) of The Counterpoint Club (TCC) podcast, a program of Chamber Music Madness (CMM), a non-profit organization based in Seattle, WA. TCC was originally designed as a screen-free virtual replacement for Tuned In! 2020, the week-long summer chamber music camp normally led each July by Skyros Quartet, Artistic Director for CMM. There is an arc to the season, approximately following the curriculum Skyros designed for Tuned In!

The first three episodes center on larger concepts, getting to know one's chamber music colleagues while introducing increasingly detailed rehearsal techniques. The later episodes are about performing and continuing music studies and potential careers after high school. Each episode follows a similar format: a history segment, a technique lesson, a question and answer session, and a guest interview, along with some fun extra content along the way. While consecutive episodes follow a logical order, any episode can be used as a stand-alone module for teaching purposes.

Each episode is approximately 45-60 minutes in length and features a companion blog post on the TCC website, thecounterpointclub.org. The blog features additional music examples, unabridged versions of the guest interviews, and downloadable worksheets with step-by-step guides for the exercises from each technique lesson.

The Teacher Guide offers ideas for how middle and high school music teachers (band, orchestra, or choir) can use TCC as part of their online learning and distance coursework. Please note that these materials are intended for students approximately in 8th grade and older. While Skyros, the creator of TCC, is a string quartet and the content and guests largely center on string instruments and repertoire, the content is easily adaptable to any music discipline. The Teacher Guide features three brief lesson outlines for each episode that can be completed by students after listening to an episode. The first lesson plan is a group activity that an entire large ensemble class can participate in together. The second is designed for small breakout groups of about 4-6 students to work on together. The third activity is designed for students to complete individually.

At the end of this document, you'll also find a few lesson ideas for assignments that are not specific to any of the episodes.

These student activities are presented as suggestions. Please feel free to use them as written, adjust as needed, or create your own activities based on our content! This content is completely free for you to use and share with your colleagues. If you use any of this content in your classes, we do ask for a simple favor: let us know what you think! **We've got a simple Teacher Feedback Questionnaire about TCC here.** We would be delighted to have your feedback on The Counterpoint Club, and hear how you are using it in your classroom. Teacher feedback and testimonials are really important to us, and help us in creating more episodes of the podcast in the future!

Opus 2, the second season of The Counterpoint Club, will premiere in the fall of 2020; Opus 3 will launch in the spring of 2021.



Episode 1: Once Upon a Time

Summary:

The Skyros Quartet discusses the role of narrative in music, creating storylines, characters, and colors. Featuring special guest: actor Shaunyce Omar.

Description:

Episode I of The Counterpoint Club is titled Once Upon a Time. In this episode, we discuss creating characters in our music as we rehearse and constructing a narrative arc across each movement of music. Willie takes a deep dive into the second movement of Beethoven's String Quartet in F major, Op. 18, No. 1, which is thought to be based on the story of Romeo and Juliet.

- **Full class activity** - Listen to a work and using the steps outlined in the **worksheet**, create a character map on a score together as a class, similar to the example on a Schubert string quartet seen in the episode's **blog post**. Try using a large ensemble work, perhaps repertoire your students played in a previous school year or repertoire you might program in the future when in-person classes return.
- **Small group activity** - Listen to a chamber music work and create a character map that tells a narrative of the music, using the steps outlined in the **worksheet**. Use the chalkboard drawing on the worksheet as an example. Students should either be able to tell the story as a narrative, or perhaps even submit a written account or drawing of their finished tale.
- **Individual assignment** - Using the **worksheet**, create a character map or narrative story based on a piece of solo music, such as what one might be working on with a private teacher or perform as a solo at Solo & Ensemble.

Episode 2: One Pulse to Rule Them All

Summary:

The Skyros Quartet discusses musical pulse within a chamber ensemble, exploring how to find the heartbeat of a piece of music, start and stop, speed up and slow down as one. Featuring special guest: the arx duo.

Description:

In this episode of The Counterpoint Club, the Skyros Quartet discusses how pulse creates the musical heartbeat of a piece of music. Brandon analyzes the history of musical pulse, from the Ancient Greeks to modern times. Justin leads us through a rehearsal technique: counting out loud with a group to establish a unified pulse. Our special guests are Mari Yoshinaga and Garrett Arney of the arx duo, a Seattle-based percussion ensemble.

- **Full class activity** - Discuss different tempo options for a piece the class is studying, playing, or performing. Without changing tempo, practice counting through different pulses, perhaps in four, in two, or in one, exploring how the music feels different in each pattern. Practice conducting patterns together.

- **Small group activity** - Choose a pop song and analyze the pulse, discussing things like which instrument/part establishes the pulse, changes in pulse, and time signature.
- **Individual assignment** - Musically count through a piece of solo music, such as what one might be working on with a private teacher or perform as a solo at Solo & Ensemble, using the worksheet for this episode as a step-by-step guide.

Episode 3: The Well-Tempered Quartet

Summary:

Well, just really how many ways are there to play equally in tune? The Skyros Quartet investigates different tuning systems and how to establish common pitch within a chamber ensemble. Featuring special guest: John Largess of the Miró Quartet.

Description:

The third episode of the Counterpoint Club is all about intonation. Sarah guides a history lesson through different tuning systems used in all kinds of music. In the technique lesson, Brandon discusses tuning exercises that the Skyros Quartet uses in rehearsal, and how you might use them in your rehearsals. Our special guest is John Largess, violist of the Miro Quartet and Associate Professor of Practice at the University of Texas at Austin Butler School of Music.

- **Full class activity** - Listen to a non-Western piece of music, such as Javanese Gamelan, that uses a different breakdown of the octave. Practice singing one of these scales, such as a Javanese pelog that breaks the octave into seven tones, compared with our western 12 tone chromatic scale.
- **Small group activity** - Practice droning for each other in scales as described in the worksheet for this episode.. If the session is held online rather than in person, this can be accomplished with selectively muting so each student can only hear themselves and the other student who is playing the drone. Rotate the drone so each student gets several opportunities to play with the drone and at least one chance to play the drone as well.
- **Individual assignment** - Submit a video of the student practicing a scale or passage from a larger piece of music with a drone.

Episode 4: Let it Go: Centering for Performance

Summary:

Skyros Quartet violinist Sarah Pizzichemi guides a journey through centering for performance, discussing preparation, stage presence, and everyone's favorite: nerves! Featuring special guest: violinist Hyeyung Yoon.

Description:

The fourth episode of The Counterpoint Club explores the history and technique of musical performance. Willie looks at how classical music concerts have changed over the last several centuries, from the perspectives of both audience and performer. Sarah takes a page from sports psychology to guide an exercise on centering before performance, to let go of excess performance energy. Our special guest is violinist Hyeyung Yoon, who teaches us about the fascinating Korean musical performance space called *madang*.

- **Full class activity and Individual assignment** - These activities are paired. Guide the class through the seven step centering process outlined in the worksheet for this episode. Following this exercise, lead a class recital, where each student performs a short solo. Before performing, each student goes through the steps of the centering process by themselves.
- **Small group activity** - Research different types of communal music making from around the world, such as Javinese gamelan, Indian classical music, bluegrass jam sessions. Describe parallels and differences between the group's chosen genre and Western classical music performances.

Episode 5: May the Paycheck Be With You

Summary:

So you think you want to enter the music industry as a professional? The Skyros Quartet explores the variety of jobs available to music majors after university and how to create a sustainable career in music. Featuring special guest: violinist Augustin Hadelich.

Description:

The final episode of The Counterpoint Club's first series, Opus 1, explores the wide variety of careers in the music industry. Justin first looks at the history of professional chamber music ensembles in America. Willie interviews Alyssa Saint, violinist and Associate Director of Admission at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, about her advice to high school students on the application process and what to look for in a university music degree program. Special guest, internationally renowned violin soloist Augustin Hadelich, talks with Sarah and Justin about becoming a successful performer, what inspires him, social media, and much more.

- **Full class activity** - Invite someone in the music industry with a non-performance based career, such as concert presenter, music administrator, or recording engineer, to speak with the class about their experience in the industry, discussing items like their personal background in classical music (do they currently or have they ever played any instruments?), and what training and qualifications enabled them to get hired for their current position. Finish the session with a question and answer session.
- **Small group activity** - Research all the jobs that go into the production of a music recording, from recording the audio, to managing distribution, to designing graphics, and of course, making the music itself.
- **Individual assignment** - Pick a career in the music industry that's listed on the worksheet for this episode that you haven't heard of or know very little about. Research specific job opportunities in that field, and what training and education is required to be qualified for such work.

General Assignments

These assignments are unrelated to any specific episode. Some are smaller and will take just a few minutes from students, while others are more large-scale projects.

- **As a class, create your own episode of The Counterpoint Club.** Choose a theme for your episode and divide your class into small groups, of about 4-6. Each group is responsible for a different segment of the episode: history lesson, technique lesson, quiztime, guest interview, Q and A, all based on the theme or topic. Each group is responsible for recording and editing their content, which is then compiled together to create an episode. You can even assign one group to write and record a simple musical theme. In addition to the knowledge gained from researching and recording each segment, students will learn a bit about audio production, sound editing, and layering musical tracks (if one group is making theme music). These are all skills that Skyros had to learn and develop to create the podcast as well! (If you do this, let us know and share the result with us!)
- **Begin a discussion in the comments section of a TCC blog post** about the content in that episode, including student reactions to musical examples in the post/episode, or related content to the topic. Skyros will do our best to chime in to these conversations as well!
- **Submit a question to Skyros for the Q and A section of the podcast.** We'll try to feature answers to as many questions as we can in future episodes. Please note that if we do feature a student's question in an episode, we'll supply a release form giving us permission from the student (if age 18 or older) or their parents/guardians permission (if under age 18) to use their voice in a TCC podcast.